



Hypercards with TuxCards

A Game of Cards

The next time you spend hours looking for an important scrap of paper, is probably a favorable moment to consider installing TuxCards, a system that allows you to manage your notes in an orderly fashion. **BY FRANK WIEDUWILT**

TuxCards [1] collects formatted texts and stores them in a tree structure. There are no restrictions to the number of possible entries or nodes. The program uses a proprietary file format, based on XML, to store the files. The application not only runs on Linux, but also on Windows with a little assistance from the Cygwin tools [2]. We tried TuxCards out on Mandrake Linux 9.1 and Knoppix 3.2.

On the Disk

The current version of TuxCards, 1.1, is available as a pre-compiled program package on the project homepage, and on this month's subscription CD. You can use the `tar xzvf tuxcards-1.1.static.tar.gz` command to unpack the `tuxcards-1.1.static.tar.gz` archive. Then change to the directory created in the last step, `tuxcards-1.1-static`, and working as `root` copy the `tuxcards` file to `/usr/local/bin`. Finally, copy the `flowers` directory to `/opt/tuxcards/`. Now drop your root privileges and launch the program by typing `tuxcards &` in a terminal window.

If you would prefer to compile the source code for the program, there are a few preparatory steps to complete, before you do so. You need version 3.1.1 or later of Qt. There is no `configure` script, so you will have to ensure that you have the right settings for the `$QTDIR`, `$QT_LIBRARY_PATH`, and

`$QMAKESPEC` environment variables. `$QTDIR` points to the directory with the Qt library; on Mandrake Linux 9.1 this is `/usr/lib/qt3`, for example, the `$QT_LIBRARY_PATH` contains the directory path to the Qt libraries, and finally `$QMAKESPEC` points to the directory containing the definition files for the `qmake` program, which is used to create makefiles.

After entering `tar xzvf tuxcards-1.1.tar.gz` to unpack the source code archive on the subscription CD, you would change directory to `tuxcards-1.1`, enter `qmake tuxcards.pro` to create the makefiles and then type `make` to compile the program. Again working as `root`, then type `make install` to transfer the program to the `/usr/local/bin` directory, allowing users to launch the program by entering

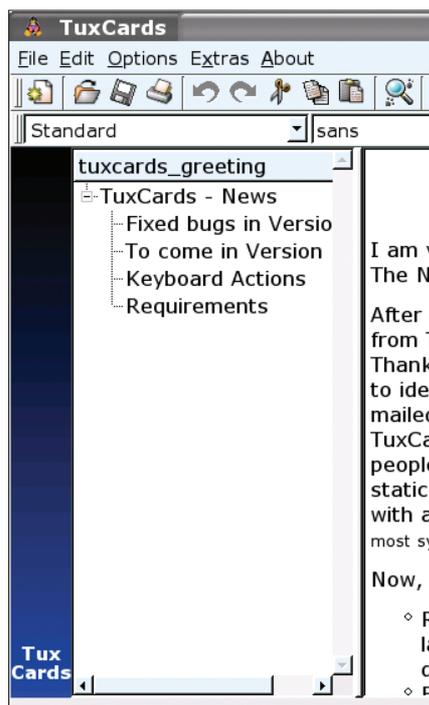


Figure 1: TuxCards



Figure 2: Editing an Entry

`tuxcards &` in a terminal window (see Figure 1).

The Tree is Growing

The first time you launch the program, it welcomes you by displaying a short how-to and an overview of keyboard shortcuts. The so-called `tuxcards_greeting` file is placed in your home directory, where you can access it again at a later date.

After selecting `File/New` to create a new file, the tree view in the left panel of the program window will contain a single entry called `root`. To assign a more intuitive name, right click on the node and select `change Properties` in the dropdown menu. This opens a dialog box where you can edit the properties of the current node (see Figure 2).

The `Entry Name` text box is used to name the node. The `Icon` option allows you to specify an icon for the node. Clicking on the empty button to the right, opens a file selection dialog box where you can select an image. If you want the entry to disappear automatically from your collection on a certain date, select the `Use Expiry Date` option and choose a date from the drop-down list. When the specified period expires,

KTools

In this column we present tools, month by month, which have proven to be especially useful when working under KDE, solve a problem which otherwise is deliberately ignored, or are just some of the nicer things in life, which – once discovered – you would not want to do without.



Figure 3: Editing program options

the program pops up a window and prompts you to decide whether to really delete the entry.

Using a right click on the node also allows you to add and delete new entries.

The text box in the right panel of the program window is where you enter your ideas. You can use the toolbox to format your entries. Basic formatting tools, such as you would expect from a simple word processor are available: you can select left, right, centered or justified alignment for the text, and use different fonts and character sizes. There are even templates for additional formats such as bullets or enumerated lists.

Unfortunately, there is no facility for defining custom formats. The *Extras / Insert Current Date* and *Extras / Insert Current Time* menu items do what you would expect, that is insert the current date and time at the current cursor position. The *Extras / Word Count* function tells you the number of words in the current entry.

The program's author is working on a function to add pictures to notes in a future version.

A Question of Options

Selecting *Options / Edit Options* opens the dialog box where you can edit the program settings (see Figure 3).

Use the *General* tab to specify whether or not you want to back up your TuxCards (and if so at what intervals), decide whether you want to automatically write your changes out to disk when you quit the program, and whether you want to create a backup copy. The *SideBar - Colors* tab contains the options

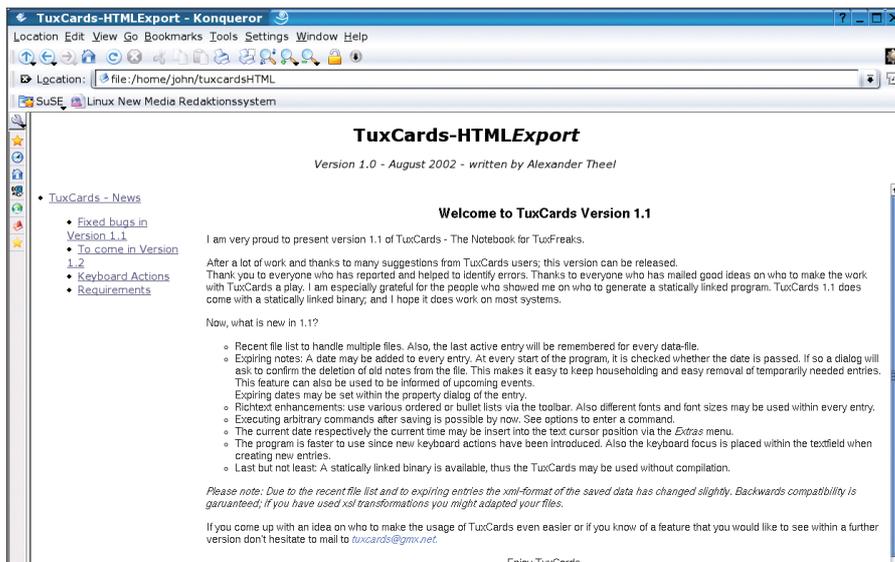


Figure 4: Notes in HTML Export format

for customizing the appearance of the sidebar on the left in the program window: you can specify the sidebar color and whether to use a color gradient.

The *SideBar - Text* tab allows you to specify whether the sidebar will be visible, if so, what text it will contain, and whether the text will be horizontally or vertically oriented. The font and character size for the nodes in the tree can be defined below *Tree*; and finally, the *Editor* tab provides options for the font type and word wrap in the editor.

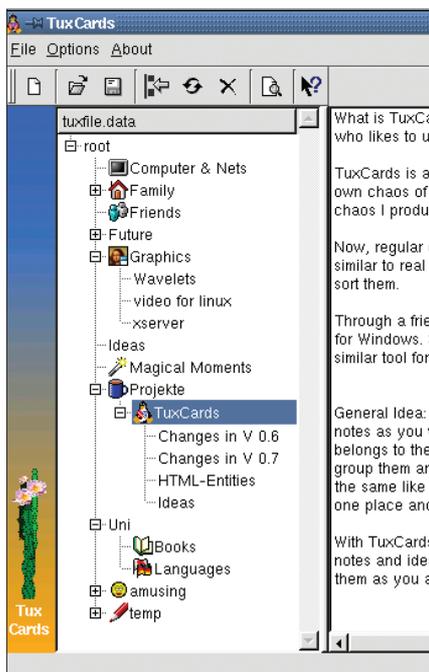


Figure 5: A little cactus

Worldwide Notes

You can export the data to HTML format to allow other users access to your notes, or even publish them on the Internet. To do so, select *File/Export to HTML* in the main menu, and – in the file selection dialog box – specify the directory where you will be storing the files. After a short interval, a collection of browser viewable HTML files should appear in the directory you specified (see Figure 4).

A Little Green Cactus

TuxCards also has a neat gimmick – it can grow cacti for you in the sidebar. To enable this, open the program options dialog box and select the *SideBar - Colors* tab. Then enable the *Enable CactusBar* option at the bottom of the dialog box. This tells the program to plant a variety of cacti to liven up the screen (see Figure 5).

TuxCards is useful for collecting and sorting short texts of all kinds. In addition to graphics import facilities, Alexander Theel, the program's author also plans to add bookmarks and simplify the installation procedure for the next version. So make sure you check back with the project homepage at regular intervals to see how he is getting on.

INFO

[1] TuxCards: <http://www.tuxcards.de>

[2] Cygwin: <http://www.cygwin.com>